STUDY ON INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION: A TQM PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

After independence there is a remarkable growth in the higher education system of India. There is a continuous growth in the higher education instead of various challenges like globalization, financing, infrastructure facilities, quality management etc. In order to develop the higher education, the role of Total Quality Management (TQM) cannot be under estimated. There is a great literature about the TQM in the manufacturing sector; health sector etc. but still there is a lack of useful literature regarding application of TQM in the education sector. If institutions really want to improve quality in their higher education system then it is necessary for them to focus on the concept of Total Quality Management. Various innovations in this field are a proof that the educational institutions are now realizing the importance of higher education. In this paper the need of continuous quality improvement, components of TQM, and challenges in TQM in higher education, means and strategies adopted by different educational institutions are discussed. The study has been conducted by consulting existing literature through historical, analytical and empirical approaches. TQM in the educational institutions is the need of hour. Due to this the authorities involved in the management of higher education system in India like UGC, AICTE, QCI, DEC, BCI have made serious efforts to improve the quality education in India and also to match Indian education standards with the international norms

Keywords: Total Quality Management, Higher Education, Continuous Improvement, Higher Educational Institutions.

A PERSPECTIVE ON QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION:

In this world of rapidly boosting competition, speedy changes of technology, falling quality, varying demographics, privatization and internalization in education have led to the use of the concept of TQM in education. The prerequisite to change the current education system is highly needed. The various students, parents and the general public is dissatisfied from the current education system due to the several complaints like students are unable to register themselves in the colleges due to limited seats, sufficient faculty is not present in the colleges, courses are taught by the senior graduates and not by the experienced faculty, lack of commitment on the part of faculty etc. (Hogg R. V., Hogg M. C., 1995). In pre independence period the Indian education system is suffering from many serious problems but after independence there is remarkable growth in the Indian education system with the establishment of several universities, technical institutes, research institutions, professional/ non-professional colleges all over the country to promote education and knowledge with a noble cause of providing easy access to education to the common Indian (UGC Golden Jubilee Seminars- 2003). As public demands for the higher quality at reduced cost, the institutions providing higher education are looking for ways to achieve, maintain and restore quality in their academic and administrative components. The solution of these institutions which are looking for the ways to provide quality education is the 'Total Quality Management' or TQM (Sims R. R., Sims S. J., 1995).

Before describing the TQM in education it is important to know what TQM is not. TQM is not a burden and cannot be done to you and for you. The initiative should be taken by the institution to introduce it. It involves doing things right first time and every time. For its successful implementation there is a strong need of everyone participation from the institution rather than the only involvement of only senior management (Sallis E., 2002). Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI), Strategic Quality Management (SQM) or Total Quality Management (TQM) is framework for the improvement of quality. But from all these TQM is considered as best and more general to gain the essence of quality improvement because TQM has the strategic component requiring evaluation and refinement of continuous improvement practices in all spheres of usefulness (Pour M. H., Yeshodhara K.).

DEFINING QUALITY AND TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT:

Before defining term TQM it is useful to define the term quality. It is related with the customer. Quality is a dynamic state related with products, services, people, processes and the environment that meets or exceeds customer's expectations, needs or desires. TQM centers on services to others (De Jager H. J., Nieuwenhuis F. J., 2005). The concept of TQM is developed by W. Edwards Deming to improve the quality of goods and services. It provides the overall concept that encourages the continuous improvement and also focuses on systematic, integrated, consistent, organization-wide perspective including everything and everyone. TQM is not a one-time process but a journey that never ends. It is a way to survive and succeed (Charantimath P. M., 2009). In order to better understand the TQM, there is a great need to study the contributions and different philosophies in the field of TQM. These contributions are shown in figure 1

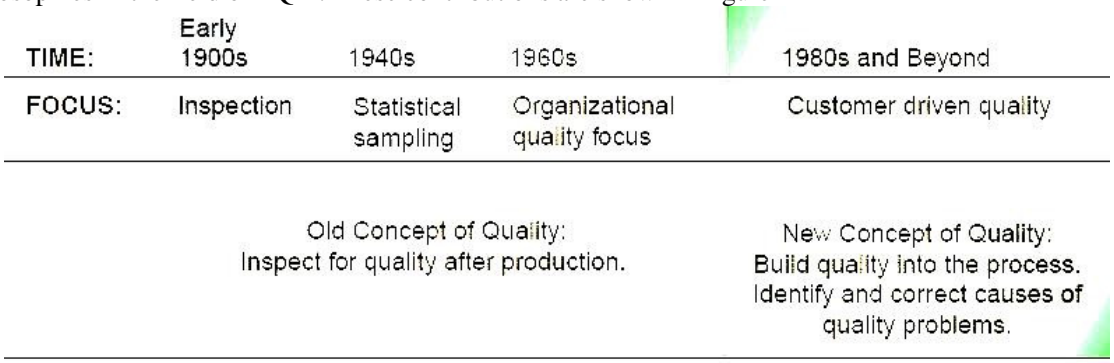

Figure 1: Timeline showing the differences between old and new concepts of quality
Source: R. Dan Reid, Nada R. Sanders, 2011

In other words TQM is an addition to the traditional way of doing business. It involves the application of quantitative methods and human resources to improve all the processes carried on in an organization and

also exceed needs of customers in present and future.
Total Quality management involves three words which can be described as:
TOTAL= Made up of the whole
QUALITY= Degree of excellence a product or service provides
MANAGEMENT= Act, art or manner of handling, controlling, directing etc (Basterfield D. H., Michna C. B. & et al., 2008).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

These are the following objectives of my study:
1) To study the need of continuous quality improvement, components of TQM, and challenges of TQM in higher education.
2) To study the means and strategies adopted by different educational institutions for ensuring TQM.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The study has been conducted by consulting existing literature through historical, analytical and empirical approaches. Historical-analytical method has been taken into consideration while observing the reports related with the study and while examining the other literature relevant to the study. Case study method, an empirical technique, is applied to study the various dimensions and impact of TQM on education sector. Data analysis technique has been taken into consideration to examine analytically routine reports studied concerned to the TQM.

AN ANALYSIS OF CURRENT QUALITY MANAGEMENT PRACTICES: AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE:

The research provides that the various models which are developed for the industries for managing quality has been adopted or tested by the higher educational institutions on a global basis (Becket N., Brookes M., 2008). There is a great use of concept TQM in the manufacturing industries but its application in the education sector seems less. But now several colleges and universities have started using the concept of TQM and its values with a belief that TQM values are more compatible with higher education than many traditional management systems. In India, All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) is set up as a national level apex advisory body to regulate, ensure and control the quality of education in the country (Thakkar C. M., 2011).
High rate or increasing rate of students' enrolment in the higher educational institutions provides that the quality of education in the higher educational institutions has been improved and is improving. But still there is a demand of great improvement to improve the quality of education in future because India has not yet attained excellent results in the TQM implementation in the higher education sector. For this India need to create a dozen or more universities, colleges that will be in accordance to international standards to fully participate in the world economy. A successful TQM initiative will surely raise the standard and market value of the educational institutions and also these organizations will become able to face any challenge from its competitors (Krishnan A., 2011). My research reveals the various initiatives adopted by higher educational institutions or should be adopted by higher educational institutions to install or implement TQM which are:

IMPROVEMENTS IN CURRICULUM:

The word curriculum has been derived from the Latin word 'currere' which means 'a course to be run'. The curriculum should be a sum of consideration of the purposes of education, the content of teaching, teaching approaches with the focus being on the product as well as the process and a programme of evaluation of the outcomes (Hok-Chun K., Dennis, 2002). It is a weapon to meet a daring reality in the field of education named 'competition', which needs the designing of an effective curriculum. By improving the previous curriculums as per changing requirements, the educational institutions can survive in the market for a long time and also they need not to face the challenge of falling enrolment rate of the students. Poor curriculum design is a major cause of quality failure. The process of curriculum design needs to be specified and

teamwork should be there to create a need based curriculum of our customers i.e. our students (Sallis E., 2002).

IMPROVEMENTS IN DEPARTMENTS: GRASS-ROOTS IMPROVEMENTS:

To make TQM a success, today the educational institutions are starting their TQM initiatives from the grass-root level because colleges and universities implement the projects but the primary commitment to manage TQM comes from top management or high officials like President/ Chancellor/ Vice Chancellor etc. These officials are playing a fundamental role in shaping the quality culture of education and are treated as the initiator of quality teaching initiatives. These leaders are conveying the relevance of the whole community in the implementation of the quality culture (Institutional Management in Higher Education, OECD). These leaders are also like a guardian to the students which are learning in their care (Oduro G. K., Dachi H. & et al., 2008).

COURSE AND METHODOLOGY IMPROVEMENTS:

Long, long ago, Newton had said that he was 'like a child, who is picking pebbles at sea-shore while the great ocean of knowledge lies before me'. Since then, knowledge has grown enormously at a much faster speed than human ability to cope with it (Role of Education in 21st Century, 2012). In today's world an area that has seen big investment is education. In the ancient India, Vidya or knowledge or education was regarded as the "third eye" of man which provides him an insight into all affairs (Mutsotso S. N., Abenga E. S., 2010). Traditional teaching is concerned with the teacher who was the controller of the learning environment and enjoyed extreme power. He/ she played the role of instructor by giving lectures and role of decision maker by designing contents of curriculum and by deciding other learning matters (Novak, J., 1998). But modern teaching methodology is much more student-centered. According to Jim Scrivener, the teacher's main role is to "help learning to happen," which includes "involving" students in what is going on "by enabling them to work at their own speed, by not giving long explanations, by encouraging them to participate, talk, interact, do things, etc" (Scrivener J., 2005). Changes in the modern education as compared to traditional education are:

Firstly, Open educational concept becomes a reality. With the help of internet, radio, television etc. a large amount of keen learners have opportunity of learning to change their carrier.

Secondly, the relationship of single teacher and student has been converted into teachers and students, students and teaching resources, students and students.

Thirdly, information technology is playing a great role in shaping the present and future of the current level of education. With widely use of modern educational technology, personalized learning gain conditions for rapid development.

Fourthly, life-long and continuous education is possible with the aid of modern educational technology. In the process of continuing education, trainees learn the up to date courses actively (Long L., Zhaohui L. & et al., 2008).

ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN 21ST CENTURY:

In a progressively knowledge-driven society, more and more people seek education as the hope for a healthier future, the key to good jobs and careers and to meaningful and fulfilling lives. It clears the fact that higher education will flourish in the coming years. So the requirement to provide advance education will become a more strategic issue for the colleges and universities (Duderstadt J., 1999).

"India is entering the global employment marketplace with a self-imposed handicap of which we are just beginning to become conscious — an acute shortage of Quality institutions of higher education. For far too long, we have been complacent about the fact that we had produced, since the 1960s, the world's second largest pool of trained scientists and engineers." - Shashi Tharror, Former UN Diplomat (Implementing Quality in Higher Education , 2012).

Today the Indian education system is one of the largest in the world. At the time of attainment of independence there were only 20 universities and 500 colleges with 0.1 million students in India. But according to the latest research there are 611 universities and university level institutions and 31324 colleges as on 31 August 2011. The vision of 12th FYP is to promote the higher education by forming new

universities and increasing the intake capacity of present universities and colleges. For enhancing quality the various measures in the 12th FYP are:

- Continuance of the reforms agenda in higher education will have to be followed in the field of academic, administration, curricula, pedagogy, programme offerings, research, etc.
- Structural and systemic reforms on a huge scale with healthy policies and realistic programmes to facilitate all the measures required for improving quality and to promote excellence in higher education, including good governance.
- Providing incentives through funding for academic reforms like introduction of semester system, grading, choice-based credit system, examination reforms, accreditation, etc. can go a long way towards enhancing quality.
- Focus in the 12th FYP will be on generation of a new knowledge society from the learners' perspective, satisfying the national and international demands of the society.
- Development of new models of accreditation and systems for implementation with the dual objectives of national level coverage and compulsory accreditation of all higher education institutions shall be undertaken in a time bound manner.
- In order to internalise quality inputs, all universities, government and government-aided colleges are to be supported with full-fledged Internal Quality Assurance Cells (IQAC) as a UGC-supported scheme, on regular basis with the required Information Technology (IT) infrastructure and supportive manpower (Inclusive and Qualitative expansion of Higher Education, 12th Five Year Plan, 2011).

CONCLUSION:

The higher education system of India had passed from various difficult situations in the post Indian independence period. But still the Indian educations system has progressed well. There are several improvements in the Indian education system from various perspectives. The authorities involved in the management of higher education system in India like UGC, AICTE, QCI, DEC, BCI have made serious efforts to improve the quality education in India and also to match Indian education standards with the international norms. TQM in the educational institutions is the need of hour. TQM will help attain excellence, which only can guarantee the survival of institutions in a highly competitive world. The future of our economic system, and thus our nation, is directly coupled to our ability as a nation to establish and keep a high quality higher education system. If suitable and necessary recognition and support will be extended to Indian educational institutes and universities then India has the potential for extending frontiers of knowledge in all disciplines.

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